

AT THE WHITE HOUSE
WITH PIERRE SALINGER
OCTOBER 26, 1962
12:00 Noon EDT
FRIDAY

MR. SALINGER: I am available for questions.

Q. Is the President going to be going to Brazil?

MR. SALINGER: As I said the day before yesterday, we are reappraising the President's entire schedule. I can't add to that. We have been in consultation with the Brazilian Government on the subject of the trip, and it is very likely that I will have something to say of a definitive nature before the day is out.

Q. Is there going to be any cancellation of Chancellor Adenauer's trip?

MR. SALINGER: I have not heard that.

Q. When is that, Pierre?

MR. SALINGER: That is November 7th.

Q. How long did the meeting with Mr. Stevenson and the other members of the committee last?

MR. SALINGER: The meeting lasted about an hour and a quarter this morning.

Q. Was Stevenson here all the time?

MR. SALINGER: Yes, sir.

Q. Does this meeting signify any change in the position that was outlined in the letter to U Thant?

MR. SALINGER: No, sir.

Q. Is Mr. Stevenson going to be a regular participant now?

MR. SALINGER: No, he was asked to come down to this particular meeting. He is going back to New York, and as I understand, intends to meet with the Secretary General of the UN this afternoon.

Q. Who else was at the meeting between the President and Mr. Stevenson?

MR. SALINGER: This is not a meeting between the President and Mr. Stevenson. Ambassador Stevenson sat in on a meeting of the National Security Council.

MR. SALINGER: I would just as soon not comment on that at this moment.

Q. Have you ever found Bertrand Russell's message?

MR. SALINGER: We found all three of them.

Q. All three?

MR. SALINGER: We found three messages from Bertrand Russell.

Q. Where? In the wastebasket?

MR. SALINGER: No. They were in the large pile of telegrams we received.

Q. Were they all the same?

MR. SALINGER: No. The last one made reference to the fact that we had been unable to find his other two.

Q. Were the first two identical?

Q. Has the President answered?

MR. SALINGER: The President has answered the three telegrams.

Q. One answer or three?

Q. Could we see a copy of the answer?

MR. SALINGER: No. We are not going to put out the answer.

Q. There is no doubt that it will be put out somewhere.

MR. SALINGER: Lord Russell may choose to put it out or may not choose to.

Q. When did the President send his answer, and how?

MR. SALINGER: He sent it by cable this morning.

Q. This is one answer to the three telegrams?

MR. SALINGER: One answer to the three telegrams.

Q. Have you any comment on the tone of Bertrand Russell's first message to the President?

MR. SALINGER: No. I think the President dealt with the telegrams. The tone of all three was identical.

Q. Was anything else of interest found in that pile?

MR. SALINGER: Do you have a specific question?

Q. Pierre, can't we persuade you to make the

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MR. SALINGER: This is not a meeting between the President and Mr. Stevenson. Ambassador Stevenson sat in on a meeting of the National Security Council.

Q. All members were present?

MR. SALINGER: So far as I know.

Q. Has the President sent a letter to President Goulart?

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Q. Pierre, can't we persuade you to make the President's reply public here since we know we will be reading it from over there?

MR. SALINGER: Well, Lord Russell hasn't received the President's reply yet.

Q. Did the President indicate in any way that he didn't think much of the tone of these cables?

MORE

MR. SALINGER: I will let the telegram speak for itself.

Q. So let it.

Q. That is what we would like to have.

Q. Can you tell us the tone of Russell's cable?

MR. SALINGER: He put out the text of all three of his.

Q. Pierre, is this the only cable the President has responded to, or telegram, of all the 48,000?

MR. SALINGER: I believe we are in the process of responding to the others.

Q. How many more have you now?

MR. SALINGER: We haven't had a count since I gave you the 48,000 figure yesterday. There was still a backlog of 5,000 or 6,000, I believe.

Q. Is the President's reply an extensive reply or an acknowledgement?

MR. SALINGER: I would say it was brief.

Q. And to the point?

Q. Pierre, is it a procedural --

MR. SALINGER: No, there is nothing procedural in the telegram.

Q. Is it just saying that this is being handled in other channels?

MR. SALINGER: It does refer to other channels; yes.

Q. Has the President been in communication with General Eisenhower in the last couple of days, either by wire, telephone, or emissary?

MR. SALINGER: Not that I am aware of.

Q. Has he been in touch with Premier Khrushchev?

MR. SALINGER: Has he been in touch with Premier Khrushchev? How?

Q. In any way?

MR. SALINGER: My answer of the last two briefings will stand on that subject.

Q. That was that you didn't want to comment on it, wasn't it?

MR. SALINGER: No, I did not.

at this time what you said?

MR. SALINGER: No. I will be glad to get the briefing and read you the answer.

Q. I will phrase the question this way: --

MR. SALINGER: You will get the same answer.

Q. Has this Government, through its Ambassador in Moscow, been in communication since this crisis arose, since Tuesday?

MR. SALINGER: The answer I made yesterday maintains.

Q. It would help if you tell me what the answer is.

MR. SALINGER: Will somebody give me yesterday's briefing, please?

Q. Has the President been in communication with Macmillan over the last two days?

MR. SALINGER: I wouldn't want to comment specifically.

Q. With whom?

MR. SALINGER: Let me answer the question. The question is whether he had been in touch with Macmillan. I said I would just as soon not comment on any specific world leaders the President has been in touch with.

Q. The reports from Western Europe this morning indicate most people, the press, et cetera, in Western Europe think the crisis has eased, almost to the point of disappearance. Would you like to comment on that?

Q. What was the question?

MR. SALINGER: The question of Mr. Harris is that it is his impression that the Western European press and the public in Western Europe is under the impression that the crisis has eased or passed.

Is that your question?

Q. Or passing.

MR. SALINGER: Or passing. I would say for BACKGROUND:

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We have no indication of any such easing.

* * * * *

Q. Pierre, there seems to have been some confusion in the United Nations yesterday about precisely what might be meant by these arrangements that...

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Q. That was that you didn't want to comment on it, wasn't it?

MR. SALINGER: No, I didn't. I refer you to the language of the briefings of both yesterday afternoon and yesterday morning.

Q. Do you recall, Pierre, since you apparently gave it some thought, what the language was?

MR. SALINGER: Of what?

Q. Of your reply to that question. Do you recall

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Q. Pierre, there seems to have been some confusion in the United Nations yesterday about precisely what might be meant by these arrangements that could be made for preliminary talks or conditions to preliminary tanks. Can you clarify that?

MR. SALINGER: I think that will have to await Mr. Stevenson's talk with Mr. U Thant this afternoon.

Q. Are these arrangements for preliminary talks subject to the conditions of U Thant's appeal?

More

MR. SALINGER: Again, I am not going to comment on that. I prefer to let that come out of their meeting.

Q. Is work on the missile sites continuing as of now?

MR. SALINGER: I made a statement on that yesterday afternoon, and I would think it possible that I will have further to say on it later today.

Q. Is the President going to stay in town this week end, and the family?

MR. SALINGER: Yes.

Q. Have you heard anything else about the boarding party on this last ship?

MR. SALINGER: I understand the Department of Defense will, as soon as it has a report in from the boarding party, make that report public.

* * * * *

Q. Pierre, as of today, is it the President of the United States' position still that the work on those bases will have to be stopped and shipment of offensive weapons to Cuba will have to be stopped? Is that still the United States position today?

MR. SALINGER: I made the United States position clear yesterday afternoon, Sandy.

Q. This is a very fast-moving situation. I would like to be sure.

MR. SALINGER: There has been no change in the position from yesterday afternoon's briefing.

Q. That was on BACKGROUND?

MR. SALINGER: That was on background.

Q. You haven't put this on BACKGROUND. Why is it necessary in something this important that we have to quote a source at the White House or something? Why can't you say this on your own?

MR. SALINGER: That is the ground rules I am operating on.

Q. Are you on the record on this no-change position?

MR. SALINGER: No. That is BACKGROUND.

Q. Can we ask the question?

Q. What is background now?

MR. SALINGER: My answer to the question is on

Q. The first one is with respect to whether work on the missile sites is continuing.

MR. SALINGER: My answer to Mr. Holloman's question is on the record.

Q. Your answer was that you made the statement on it yesterday afternoon and it is possible you may have something to say on it later today. That is on the record?

MR. SALINGER: That puts me in the position of identifying myself as the background source yesterday. If you will scratch my first part of the answer as far as the record is concerned, you can leave my second part, that I may have something to say this afternoon.

Q. Can you clarify this work on the bases later today?

MR. SALINGER: I thought I might be able to have something on that later today.

Q. Do you expect that the word you will have this afternoon on missile sites will be encouraging?

MR. SALINGER: It depends which side you are on.

Q. Is there a doubt in your mind?

Q. Can we quote you on that?

Q. You cut out words since yesterday and put the rest on the record?

MR. SALINGER: What I said is I thought I could clarify his question later today.

Q. That is on the record?

MR. SALINGER: That is on the record.

Q. And what was your answer --

Q. Can you answer my question, Pierre?

MR. SALINGER: I did answer it.

Q. What was your answer?

MR. SALINGER: We can have him read the record back.

* * * * *

Q. You cannot say on the record that our position is changing or steadfast?

MR. SALINGER: No, I have said that on BACKGROUND: That our position remains as I outlined it yesterday afternoon.

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MR. SALINGER: No. That is BACKGROUND.

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Q. What is background now?

MR. SALINGER: My answer to the question is on background.

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Q. There are a couple of answers referring to yesterday's background answers that are on the record now.

MR. SALINGER: Let's go through them.

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MR. SALINGER: No, I have said that on BACKGROUND: That our position remains as I outlined it yesterday afternoon.

Q. The answer you just gave now is on the record?

MR. SALINGER: Which answer?

Q. That you just got through with?

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MR. SALINGER: No. I just said it was for BACKGROUND.

Q. In other words, on the record you cannot say?

MR. SALINGER: I am not saying it on the record; that is correct.

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Q. On the record, what are you saying -- no comment?

MR. SALINGER: That is right.

Q. When you say later today, Pierre, can you pinpoint that? Do you have any idea just when or even in a general way?

MR. SALINGER: No.

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Q. Is the United States considering direct action against the missile sites?

MR. SALINGER: I refer you to my BACKGROUND session of yesterday.

* * * * *

Q. Is Ambassador Stevenson still here?

MR. SALINGER: No, sir.

Q. Has he left for New York?

MR. SALINGER: I don't know. He left in a State Department car. I don't know where he was going.

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Q. Pierre, I am sorry, but I think on a question as important as is the U. S. considering direct action against the missile sites, it would be useful for you now, in the interest of accuracy, to either repeat that answer on a BACKGROUND basis or whatever.

MR. SALINGER: I am not going to do that, Bill. You can read yesterday's background, which was very explicit on all these subjects.

Q. Pierre, yesterday's BACKGROUND is taking on the authority of holy writ. These things change every day.

MR. SALINGER: When the situation changes, or the Government position changes, I will let you know about it.

Q. Was this question specifically asked yesterday?

MR. SALINGER: Yes, it was, in another form.

Q. That further action might be necessary.

MR. SALINGER: The President's speech speaks for itself.

Q. That was the phrase.

Q. Pierre, has there been a deadline set for beginning this dismantling?

MR. SALINGER: I wouldn't comment on that.

Q. Are you going to repeat your statement of yesterday regarding this?

MR. SALINGER: I was asked yesterday whether there had been any other exchange of letters between the President and Premier Khrushchev, and I said when I have anything on that I will give it to you.

Q. This statement regarding no change in the easing of the situation, is that BACKGROUND?

MR. SALINGER: That is.

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Q. Has there been a telephone communication between the President and Premier Khrushchev?

MR. SALINGER: No, sir.

Q. Can you give us any guidance for the rest of the day in terms of your briefing plans or what you are expecting?

Q. What was the question?

MR. SALINGER: The question was whether I would give you any guidance on briefing. There are several things pending which I can't time. I will definitely have an afternoon briefing at 5:00 o'clock instead of 4:00, but there may be some information come out before that time.

Q. If and when there is a temporary lid --

MR. SALINGER: I will be glad to give you a lid now until 1:30.

Q. Pierre, how about the week end? Will there be two briefings tomorrow and Sunday?

MR. SALINGER: We plan to operate as during the week day anyway tomorrow.

Q. Perhaps not on Sunday?

MR. SALINGER: We will see what tomorrow brings.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

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MR. SALINGER: Yes, it was, in another form.

Q. That is just it. Yesterday's question referred to Kuchel.

MR. SALINGER: Well, as you saw, first of all on Senator Kuchel, that story was killed. He didn't make that statement; and second, I referred you yesterday to the President's speech, which I think is very explicit on this subject, and still is.

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